

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Gardiner Greene Hubbard, February 13, 1877, with transcript

Salem lecture very good Boston, Mass. Feb. 13th, 1877. Dear Mr. Hubbard,

I just steal enough time to write a few lines to you to tell you of the great and unexpected success of my lecture in Salem last night. I send a Globe newspaper with this — in fact four or five copies — that you may see the best proof of the practicability of the Telephone even in its present state.

( The Globe reporter in Salem composed the despatch and dictated it to me sentence by sentence.

( I repeated each sentence to Mr. Watson through the Telephone — and Mr. Watson repeated it to me by Telephone that I might be sure he understood it. A Globe reporter in Boston took it down from Mr. Watson's voice. There was no hitch from first to last — even the proper names being understood. The despatch was transmitted (in spite of the repetition of each sentence) in a much shorter time than could possibly have been done with the Morse system. — a shorthand reporter being fully occupied.

To my surprise and delight Mr. Watson's speech and songs were heard by every person in the hall — there being between 500 & 600 persons present.

I was so glad that Mabel was there — although she must have had a most uncomfortable time of it. There was a little difficulty in getting our connections at first as the A. & P. office in Boston had placed us 2 in connection with the wrong wire. I declined to commence until I was sure we were in communication with Mr. Watson. I had to send down to the Telegraph office and telegraph to Boston by another line to let them know they had made some mistake in the connections for we had no battery connect upon our line at all. At

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the same time Mr. Watson — seeing that something was wrong — sent a man up to the A. & P. office — in Boston — and soon the news came to me that we were in telegraphic communication with Mr. Watson.

I then went upon the platform — having kept the audience waiting for a quarter of an hour.

Poor Mabel felt that something had gone wrong and was ready to drop upon the floor with anxiety — Mrs. Sanders — ditto — ditto. Mrs. Sanders is one who always prognosticates defeat — and her fears were by no means alloyed when she heard a gentleman behind her remark to a friend that he thought the “blue glass mania” and “the telephone” should be placed in the same category!! But when the first sounds (produced by the intermittent current) came peeling out from the Telephone — there came a tremendous burst of applause from the audience — and all scepticism was thrown on one side.

After performing several experiments with intermittent currents of electricity — the operator telegraphed to Boston to have the battery removed from the circuit — and I went on with my lecture till I was interrupted by “Hoy! — Hoy! Hoy!” from the Telephone.

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As I placed my mouth to the instrument it seemed as if an electric thrill went through the audience — and that they recognized for the first time — what was meant by the “Telephone”.

I spoke to Mr. Watson in a low tone of voice that was scarcely audible at the other end of the hall and carried on a little conversation with him as to what I wished him to do repeating his answers to the audience.

I asked him to make a speech and he said he would be happy to do so — and that he felt much more confidence in addressing them from a distance of 18 miles than if he were standing on the platform. On repeating this answer to the audience — there was great

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laughter — which quite disconcerted Mabel. She made up her mind that it was all a failure! — and hardly looked up at all after that!

Mr. Watson's speech was audible all over the hall, and as I had previously repeated it to the audience — they were able to recognize the words without difficulty.

It was indeed a great success. I should think also that pecuniarily it must have been a good thing for the Essex Institute. Every ticket was sold — and a large crowd was turned away from the door. I have no doubt that the success of the lecture will lead to invitations to lecture which may bring me in something this spring.

In our experiments we are now testing different 4 methods of clamping the iron diaphragm and condensing the air upon it. — We are much pleased with a new way of condensing air, which seems to give us perfect distinctness — at least so far as we can judge now. It is however very often our experience — that the results we are confident of one day are overturned the next — and it may be wise to express myself carefully until we have verified and re-verified our conclusions. A is the metal diaphragm. B a mouth-piece, and C a sheet of india rubber.

Your letter and Mr. Hubbard's were received safely but I have been so busy with my Telephone lecture — that I have been unable to answer till now. I have come to the conclusion that I better use your cheque for \$100 myself in stimulating Mr. Gregory about my foreign patents — pending arrangements with Gov. Howard and Mr. Converse. At present everything is at a standstill. Both are willing to assist me and they have come together and talked the matter over — and Gov. Howard has made two p opos. to me.

1st. He and Mr. Converse wish to have an interest in American Patents as well and wish to talk their plan over with you and Mr. Sanders. Gov. Howard proposes to form a company of prominent men — capitalists &c. — and organize — say — you as President — me as Vice-President — Mr. Converse as Treasurer or something of that kind. 5 He says he would in three weeks organize a company controlling several millions of dollars —

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which company should controll the Patents for the invention all over the world . If such men as Sec.Fish — Francis Adams and other well known men were connected with it — there would be a much better chance of having the matter go through easily abroad — expecially if it were known that there was plenty of money to back it up.

He would like to see such a company organized and he would propose to employ me — at a regular salary — “say of \$5000 a year” — to devote my whole time to perfect the thing.

Gov. Howard is in earnest about the matter and says that he knows exactly the men to interest — and states that he has the power to organize the company — and wants to have a meeting with you & Mr. Sanders about the matter.

He spoke very freely about himself — said he was interested in me personally and in my work — that he had made enquiries about me — and was told that I was “a royal man”!! — and that he wanted to help me on with the work. He stated that he had no pecuniary motives in the matter — and would be satisfied with a very moderate share.

In speaking of himself — he told me t<sup>t</sup>at he suffered from heart-disease and was liable to be called away any moment — and that he always had his affairs arranged so as to be ready. He had all the wealth he 6 cared for. He told me this he said — that I might see he had no pecuniary motives in the matter and he added that — “after seeing your deaf-mute school — and your telephone — I want to live — if it is only to see what is coming out of it all”!! He said he believed that Telephony had a great future before it — and he wanted his name to be connected with it — otherwise he would never have dreamed of taking it up.

If you & Mr. Sanders did not wish to entertain any such plan as he proposed — then he and Mr. Converse would be willing to take up my foreign patents upon the following terms. They would pay all the expenses and he would go to Europe to advance the matter and the patents should be assigned in the following manner. Gov. Howard 3/12. Mr. Converse 3/12. A.G.B. 6/12 — Gov. Howard however having the power to dispose of 2 of my 6

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twelfths — if he thought advisable abroad — by giving an interest in the invention to some person or other in London or Paris. In no case was my interest to be reduced below 4/12.

I think it would be well to have a meeting and decide upon some definite plan of action.

Mr. Watson says that William's last bill was made out in duplicate and one bill forwarded to you and the other to Mr. Sanders — so that the amount upon your bill is your half of the expenses alone. Mr. Sanders has settled his share with Mr. Williams.

Mr. Watson says your half came to somewhere about 7 \$150 but you probably have the bill in your possession.

I mysterious telegram has come from Mr. Ponton “Important letter mailed to you today — trust no one till you receive it”!! Such floods of applications make their appearance that I have had a postal card printed “all applic. for Teleph. sh. be address. to Hon. G. G. H. &c.”

Love to Gertrude and Mrs. Hubbard.

Yours respectfully, A. Graham Bell. P. S. Please excuse haste. P. S. I have a good mind to repeat my lecture in Salem for my own benefit with P. D. Richards as manager. Telegraph to me if you approve the plan. A.G.B. I can get myself “invited” to do so. A.G.B.